

T™APESTRY

COUNSELING FAMILIES. BUILDING INTEGRITY.

Changing Seasons: When mothering and midlife meet Eating Disorders

She is a mother and a lover of life. She is continually giving and going non-stop between caring for her kids, trying to maintain time with her spouse and meet the needs of her work life. None of these every moment challenges meet the intensity of her demanding internal expectations.

This mother has survived many challenges and made it through every one of them even stronger. But, she is struggling with something bigger than she can beat on her own. It is an eating disorder and she is keeping it hidden from those closest to her and fears anyone in her family finding out. She feels like she is ready to explode but keeps a tight lid on this container she calls her life. New life blossoms all around her but something she can't name is missing deep within her soul. She feels empty... fruitless, lost and lonely.

Many women I counsel have suffered in silence for years. They have tried to manage their own emotional needs in vain. Vulnerability to eating disorders as well as other damaging addictive behaviors emerge often coupled with severe anxieties or depressive illnesses.

Although the seasons may be different, the experiences often resonate when the question, "What is feeding this sense of deprivation at this season of your life?" is carefully explored:

"I feel like joy has been drained out of me"
"I've lost myself in the shuffle"
"I'm not feeling connected to the most important person in my life anymore"

Significant Seasons triggering the reemerging or development of an eating disorder includes:

- **Pregnancy and Motherhood** introduce both sudden role and body transitions that can be overwhelming and unprepared for.



- **Midlife and menopause** froth with hormone shifts that intensely affect mood, energy levels and sleep patterns put stress and strain on body, mind and spirit.

- **Divorce (or) Relationship** betrayal may lay a fertile groundwork for eating disorders due to feelings such as grief, anger and loss.

- **Empty Nesting** and launching children can be one of life's most rewarding experiences, yet also brings on the challenge of role shift and loss.

- **Parenting Parents** and end of life realities add financial & emotional burdens difficult to face.

- **Shifting roles and goals**- Inability to manage renegotiating life focus and accept ones' present limitations such as difficulty dealing with the grief of dreams unfulfilled.

(Continued on opposite side)

When medical and clinical interventions are critical:

Compromising & life threatening medical effects of eating disorders:

- Organ compromise
- Heart Rate < 40 bpm
- Dehydration
- Blood pressure below 90/60
- Weight below 85% IBW
- Malnutrition
- Electrolyte imbalances
- Osteoporosis/Osteopenia
- Hyperthermia
- Bradycardia
- Diabetes
- Multiple fractures

Common Behaviors associated with eating disorders:

- Inability to control food intake
- Starvation, Bingeing, Purging
- Diuretic or Stimulant Abuse
- Laxative or Ipecac Abuse
- Compulsive exercising
- Obsessing over calories intake and how to eliminate calories
- Eating in isolation
- Intense anxiety associated with eating or phobias related to eating or certain foods

Important Questions to ask....

1. Do you make yourself sick you feel uncomfortably full?
2. Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?
3. Have you recently lost over 15 pounds in a 3 month period?
4. Do you believe yourself to be too fat when others say you are too thin?
5. Would you say that food dominates your life?

Any person answering “yes” to one or more of these five questions is quite likely to have an eating disorder. SCOFF Assessment by Morgan, F.F., Lacey, J.H., & Luck, A. (2002, April).

Changes of seasons are inevitable and can be filled with meaning and purpose versus wroth of endless pain and suffering. Tapestry Associates are here to bridge the continuum of care during this season of change.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.....



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